

The Commoner

Level 0 Character Class Option

Though she needn't be up until dawn to milk the cows, a female halfling farmer stands by the barn, watching the earliest tentative fingers of sunrise grasp the horizon. In her hand is a hefty wooden cudgel, one she's only used on louts at the bar, and its unfamiliar weight is but a small comfort to her as she squints, searching, into the near-light of the early morning. She knows the beast that dragged off two of her herd is out there, and that when it arrives she'll be here, waiting.

A male dwarf merchant, his beard frazzled from a night's events, drags himself home through a grumbling stupor. His head aches from being accosted by a pair of thugs, who stole his coin pouch after ambushing him outside a tavern. The dwarf decides, then and there, that he will learn to defend himself. He can no longer afford to be helpless.

Scrubbing the royal linens, a human washwoman sighs to herself, dreaming tales of intrigue and subterfuge. She's always had an ear for secrets, and she's fairly sure that people would pay good coin for what she's heard. It's just a matter of making the right connections, and staying out of trouble. The rest, she hopes, should come naturally.

Though adventurers can become figures of lore and legend, most didn't start their lives quite so audaciously. Whether reluctantly or of their own volition, commoners sometimes start down the path to becoming fully-realized adventurers, learning bit by bit what it takes to survive. Many die before achieving glory, but those that endure are all the greater for their suffering and sacrifice.

Creating a Commoner

The commoner class is not an ordinary class, and does not attempt to compete with actual adventuring classes, nor does it even offer full class levels.

Rather, the commoner class illustrates the progression an ordinary individual must undertake when becoming an adventurer, and is suitable both for player characters taking their first steps into a dangerous world, and NPCs that more seasoned characters can train and adopt into their way of life.

What brought you to seek a life of adventure, and who do you hope to become? Are you a starry-eyed idealist, or do you have a grim determination to do what is necessary? Do you confront the peril you face with optimism, conviction, or fatalism, and what do you hope to achieve by placing yourself in harm's way?

Tales of the Common Folk

Playing a commoner is fundamentally different than any other kind of adventurer. One major difference is, naturally, a commoner has much lower odds of survival. Because of this, a second difference is that where adventurers typically seek out adventure, the same is not usually true for commoners.

Thus, stories involving commoners need a very compelling reason for the commoners to become involved. Maybe the antagonists have someone you care about, are killing and draining the blood of your livestock, or have been replacing your fellow townsfolk with twisted aberrant clones. Regardless of what form the story takes, the stakes for commoners must always be personal.

Further, since commoners are expected to die, your DM may decide to have each player at your table roll up multiple commoners. It is recommended each player have no more than 3 commoner characters, though a stupendously lethal campaign may necessitate a maximum of 4 characters. When

any of these characters gains their first class level, it is recommended that they become that player's only character.

Finally, commoners are not designed to journey alongside more seasoned adventurers, excepting the case of an odd NPC the party decides to take along for the ride. Unless there is a plot reason for it, no player characters should be commoners while another player character has actual class levels.

If the commoner player characters desire an experienced escort, it is recommended the DM make an NPC for this purpose. Should this NPC prove too effective or should the player characters rely on them overmuch, however, the DM may concoct plans to remove them, to turn them against the player characters, or to otherwise highlight the utter vulnerability of being a commoner, regardless of circumstance.

Quick Build

You can make a commoner quickly by following these suggestions. First, Strength or Dexterity should be your highest ability score, followed by Constitution. Second, select the common folk background, found at the end of this option.

The Commoner

Level	Proficiency Bonus	Features	Fate Points Gained	Exp. Level
1/8	+1	Common Flaw	0	– 300
1/4	+1	Common Talent, Fate Points	1	– 225
1/2	+1	Uncommon Talent, Unflawed	1	– 125
1st	+2	Class Level	0	0

Class Features

As a commoner, you gain the following class features.

Hit Points

Hit Dice: 1d2 per commoner partial level

Hit Points at 1/8 Level: 2 + your Constitution modifier

Hit Points at Higher Levels: 2 per commoner partial level after 1/8

Proficiencies

Armor: None

Weapons: Choose any two simple weapons

Saving Throws: Choose any one

Skills: Choose any one

Equipment

You start with the following equipment, in addition to the equipment granted by your background:

- a simple weapon
- a set of common clothes
- (a) a 5 lb. sack of grain, (b) a handful of nails, or (c) an ale tankard
- (a) a chicken and 10 lb. of feed, (b) one set of artisan's tools, or (c) one random trinket found on page 160 of the *Player's Handbook*
- (a) a worn holy symbol, (b) a diary, or (c) a bucket
- (a) 50 feet of hempen rope, (b) a bedroll, or (c) 10 torches

Levelling and Starting Wealth

When you create a commoner character, it starts with an experience deficit, as noted in the Exp. Level column of the Commoner table. This is the amount of experience a commoner requires before they can receive their first true class level. A commoner receives additional partial commoner levels as this experience deficit diminishes, at the numbers listed in the Exp. Level column.

The commoner class is a precursor to being able to take actual class levels and thus a commoner cannot multiclass, and no character can multiclass into being a commoner.

If you choose to use starting wealth based on class rather than the equipment provided by class and background, the commoner class allows you to start play with 1d4 gp.

Common Flaw

Though commonfolk are hardy and well-versed in labor, most are unsuited for adventuring or the rigors of combat. When you take your first partial level as a commoner, you gain your choice of one of the following flaws:

Animal Friend. You consider yourself a close friend of all beasts, big and small. Whenever you see a beast, regardless of its CR or whether or not it is hostile, you treat it as if it were a friendly creature, acting as if you were charmed by it. You can use an action on your turn to make a Wisdom saving throw with a DC of 15 – the CR of the beast (round up). On a success, you are no longer obligated to consider that beast as friendly for the next 24 hours.

Cowardly. You are automatically frightened of any hostile creature with a CR equal to or greater than twice your partial character level. You can use an action on your turn to attempt to overcome this fear, rolling a Wisdom saving throw against a DC of 10 + the creature's CR (round up). If you are successful, this flaw does not cause you to be afraid of that creature for the next 24 hours.

Curious. The world contains such dangers, and such wonders! When you first see a lever, button, tripwire, or similar triggering device, you must make a Wisdom saving throw with a DC of 10 + the number of these saving throws you have succeeded in the last 24 hours. If you fail this saving throw, you must move towards the device and attempt to trigger it, until it is either triggered or out of your sight.

Foolhardy. The thrill of real combat often overcomes your common sense. After rolling initiative, you must use your movement speed to move as close as you can to the hostile creature with the highest CR that you can see, heedless of dangers between you and your target. You must then use your action to attack that creature or, if the creature is still out of range, use the Dash action and continue moving as close as possible to the creature. You can act normally on subsequent turns.

Illiterate. You cannot read any languages, and treat words (and those who read them often) with extreme skepticism and suspicion.

Rational. Everyone can be reasoned with, and you've never met a situation you can't talk your way out of. When you encounter a creature with whom you share a language, you cannot attack that

creature, and often attempt to persuade that creature using skill checks or simply defend yourself from harm using actions such as Dodge or Hide. You can use an action to make a Wisdom (Insight) check opposed by that creature's Charisma (Deception). On a success, you can recognize that creature as a threat, and can make attacks against it.

Superstitious. You see omens and portents everywhere, but fortunately you know the proper signs to ward them off. The first time you see a specific magical signifier (a glowing skull, a spellbook, a set of mystic runes etched into a door) and are not engaged with hostile creatures, you must stop what you are doing and undertake a one minute long routine of mutterings and somatic gestures designed to ward you from evil. You can take no other action until this is complete.

Talkative. You chatter almost incessantly, including in inopportune moments. Stealth checks made by friendly creatures within 30 feet of you are made with disadvantage, and hostile creatures have advantage on initiative checks they make when fighting you, if they were able to hear you before they could see you.

Common Flaws and Dungeon Mastery

A commoner's Common Flaw is intended to be both a hindrance and often humorous, though not to impede gameplay. When creating an adventure for commoner characters, a DM should make sure to provoke each character's flaw at least once, though perhaps twice or even three times, if necessary.

Commoners are, by definition, not suited to adventuring, and in dangerous situations are intended to perhaps die by way of their flaws. A life or death situation should not occur every time a flaw is provoked, but it should not be unheard of, either.

Players may be tempted to choose a flaw they believe will not occur in gameplay. If the DM believes this is the case, they should be sure to alter gameplay to accommodate that flaw, or simply have the players determine their flaws randomly by rolling 1d8 and selecting that entry on the list.

Common Talent

Starting at 1/4 level, you have learned a few basic tricks to enhance your survival. Choose one of the following benefits to receive:

Skilled

Skills you are proficient in use a proficiency bonus of +2, instead of +1.

Sturdy

You gain one additional maximum hit point for each commoner partial level you have.

The Gift

You learn a single cantrip from the cleric, sorcerer, or wizard spell list. Your spellcasting ability for this cantrip is Wisdom if you chose a cleric cantrip, Charisma for a sorcerer cantrip, and Intelligence for a Wizard cantrip. You do not require a focus or materials to cast this cantrip, but once you use it, you cannot use it again until you take a short or long rest.

You use your spellcasting ability modifier when setting the saving throw DC for a commoner spell you cast and when making an attack roll with one, as follows:

Spell save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your spellcasting ability modifier
Spell attack modifier = your proficiency bonus + your spellcasting ability modifier

Weapon Training

You have begun extensively training with the weapons you use. You use a proficiency bonus of +2, instead of +1, for attacks with any weapon you are proficient in.

Fate Points

Also at 1/4 level, your destiny begins to shape itself, and you are likely fated for more than your common origins. You gain one fate point.

When you would die or be reduced to 0 hit points, you can choose to expend your fate point. If you do, you instead do not die or you ignore a single source of damage that would reduce you to 0 hit points. Your DM comes up with a creative and perhaps implausible explanation for how you have escaped harm.

Once you use a fate point, it does not return, and is permanently expended. At 1/2 level, you gain one additional fate point, cumulative with the other fate point you may or may not still have.

Uncommon Talent

At 1/2 level, you are beginning to seem more like an actual adventurer, and less like expendable cannon fodder. You gain the improved version of your Common Talent trait, listed below, which functions in addition to the trait as described in Common Talent.

Skilled, Improved

You learn one additional skill of your choice.

Sturdy, Improved

You gain proficiency in your choice of either light or medium armor.

The Gift, Improved

You learn one 1st-level spell off the same class spell list as the cantrip you chose. You can cast this spell once, requiring neither a focus or spell slots. After casting this spell, you require a long rest before you can cast that spell again.

Weapon Training, Improved

You gain proficiency in one martial weapon of your choice.

Unflawed

Also at 1/2 level, you have learned enough from your trials that you are no longer troubled by the inexperience that once plagued you. You ignore the effects of your Common Flaw feature.

Class Level

Once you reach 1st level, you are no longer a commoner, and have become a full-fledged (if still somewhat green) adventurer.

You immediately lose all commoner class features, proficiencies, and unspent fate points, and gain the benefits associated with the 1st level of a non-commoner class of your choosing (other than starting gear). You lose all commoner partial levels, and gain the 1st level of your chosen class.

Choosing a Class

Though your choices as a commoner do not mandate that you choose one particular class, you still may want to select one that roughly follows the path you have taken. It can be jarring for a cowardly commoner who has learned The Gift of magic to gain their first class level as a barbarian.

Alternatively, such a thematic jump could make for a good story. Why would this character forsake their natural talents, and choose a different path? Was there something in their early trials that made them decide this? Or do they intend to return to their initial predilections later on, perhaps through multiclassing or an appropriate subclass?

Additional Background

The following background is available to all characters, but makes an ideal starting point for a commoner.

Common Folk

Sun up, sun down, you live an ordinary life in one of the many small towns or big cities that are scattered across the world. You are used to hard work and toil. Though you are relatively poor, you can usually scrape together enough to get by.

How do you feel about where you have grown up, and the life you have lived? Do you have regrets, dreams, or aspirations? And, naturally, when adventure comes calling, how will you respond?

Skill Proficiencies: Perception, Survival

Tool Proficiencies: One set of artisan's tools

Equipment: Dirty common clothes, a set of artisan's tools, a memento of a friend or loved one, and a belt pouch containing 5 gp

Daily Toil

In any community, regardless of size, everyone has a purpose. Some may be more essential than others, but every member fills a role that identifies them and ingrains themselves in the fabric of society. Choose a vocation for your character from the following list, or determine one randomly.

d8 **Daily Toil**

1 Farmer

2 Innkeeper

3 Herder

4 Town drunk

5 Town guard

6 Wagon or coach driver

7 Domestic servant

8 Artisan (roll once on the Guild Business table, *Player's Handbook*, page 132)

Feature: Hard Worker

You are able to press on through challenging conditions, exerting yourself more than should be possible.

When you would gain a level of exhaustion from any source other than a class feature, make a Constitution saving throw. The DC of this saving throw is 12 + twice the number of times you've rolled this saving throw in the past 30 days. If you succeed on this saving throw, you do not gain the level of exhaustion.

Suggested Characteristics

Common folk tend to be at once determined and resigned, accepting of their lot in life but willing to make the most of it and continue to press on. The common folk often pride themselves on their distance from formality and luxury, considering the hardships they suffer to be the hallmarks of a life well-lived.

d8 Personality Trait

- 1 If I'm not worn out, the job's not done.
- 2 A well-timed grunt or spit says all that needs saying.
- 3 I celebrate just as hard as I work.
- 4 I don't trust large sums of money. Nothing good ever comes from that.
- 5 I know thousands of jokes about nobles, want to hear one?
- 6 Singing helps the time go by, and makes life bearable.
- 7 I understand animals. Usually better than people.
- 8 I try and learn about all sorts of places I'll probably never visit.

d6 Ideal

- 1 **Community.** Everyone needs a helping hand, sometimes. (Good)
- 2 **Strength.** The stronger I get, the more I can do. (Neutral)
- 3 **Selfishness.** My needs are all that matter. (Evil)
- 4 **Status.** Hard work improves my social standing. (Lawful)
- 5 **Freedom.** I'm always looking for a chance to cut loose. (Chaotic)
- 6 **Order.** Things are the way they are for a reason. (Lawful)

d6 **Bond**

- 1 I believe that my community should prosper, and everything I do is for them.
- 2 I have a sick relative, and I must work to support them.
- 3 My gambling debts are particularly large, and I fear those coming to collect.
- 4 The world is a dangerous place, and I must protect my people from harm.
- 5 I'm in love with a noble, and must outgrow my social standing if I'm to have a chance.
- 6 Some day, I'll make my family name mean something.

d6 **Flaw**

- 1 I have an irrational hatred of nobles, or of one noble family in particular.
- 2 I'm actually surprisingly lazy.
- 3 I have an almost slavish adherence to protocol.
- 4 Any time that can be a party, should be a party.
- 5 Monsters and dragons are just superstition! I refuse to learn otherwise.
- 6 I'm very practical, and complicated plans completely escape me.